

## **V. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

This section of the report addresses the accomplishments of the Department of the Interior (DOI or Interior) in meeting the requirements of Public Law 106-107. The DOI is committed to:

1. improving the effectiveness and performance of Federal financial assistance programs;
2. simplifying Federal financial assistance application and reporting requirements;
3. improving the delivery of services to the public; and
4. facilitating greater coordination among those responsible for delivering such services.

### **A. Participation in the Government-wide Streamlining and Grants.gov Efforts**

#### **1. Government-wide Streamlining Efforts**

Because Public Law 106-107 requires Federal agencies to work together, a considerable portion of DOI resources continue to be directed toward Government-wide initiatives. Interior continues to be involved in inter-agency workgroups including the Pre-Award Workgroup, Interagency Committee on Suspension and Debarment, Interagency Electronic Grants Committee (IAEGC), and Grants.gov.

#### **2. Grants.gov Efforts**

The DOI participated in the Grants.gov FIND mechanism and APPLY pilot. To date, DOI has participated in every Grants.gov pilot since Grants.gov's inception. Interior also reviewed the Grants.gov prototype and provided feedback to the Grants.gov Project Management Office. The results of the pilots have improved the value of Grants.gov.

The DOI actively promotes Grants.gov. Bureaus hold training sessions and work with recipients individually. There are links to Grants.gov on several of DOI's websites, including bureaus, program offices, and the Office of the Secretary, Office of Acquisition and Property Management website.

In order to fully benefit from Grants.gov, discussions have taken place to interface Grants.gov with the Federal Business Management System (FBMS). FBMS is an integrated financial management system for use by all bureaus that will:

- a. allow users in the field and senior management to access common financial data when they need it to perform their functions effectively and efficiently,
- b. provide processing necessary to record underlying transaction data and the infrastructure to provide easy access to the data will be handled in the background with limited or no human intervention, and
- c. provide a secure integrated systems information environment that will support e-government initiatives, be paperless, require only a single user logon for access, allow one-time initial data entry, and provide easy access to common data.

The grants management system, a subsystem of FBMS, will support Grants.gov.

### Summary of This Year's Progress

- ◆ Interior has effectively supported the public use of Grants.gov. As of June, DOI has received more applications through Grants.gov than any other Federal agency except for the Department of Health and Human Services.
- ◆ Interior is currently working with Grants.gov to interface Grants.gov with the DOI grants management system under development.

### Future Plans

- ◆ Interior will review all application packages and determine opportunities for additional streamlining and standardization. By reducing the number of forms needed for discretionary applications, application packages can be made available on Grants.gov sooner.
- ◆ The DOI grants management system will be integrated with Grants.gov.
- ◆ Interior will continue to encourage public use of Grants.gov.

## **3. Participation in the Grants Management Line of Business Task Force**

Another Government-wide electronic initiative DOI actively participates in is the Grants Management Line of Business Task Force. Interior regularly attends the Grants Management Line of Business Task Force meetings, participates on the Target Architecture Sub Team, and in data collection.

## **4. Participation in Other Streamlining and Standardizing Government-wide Activities**

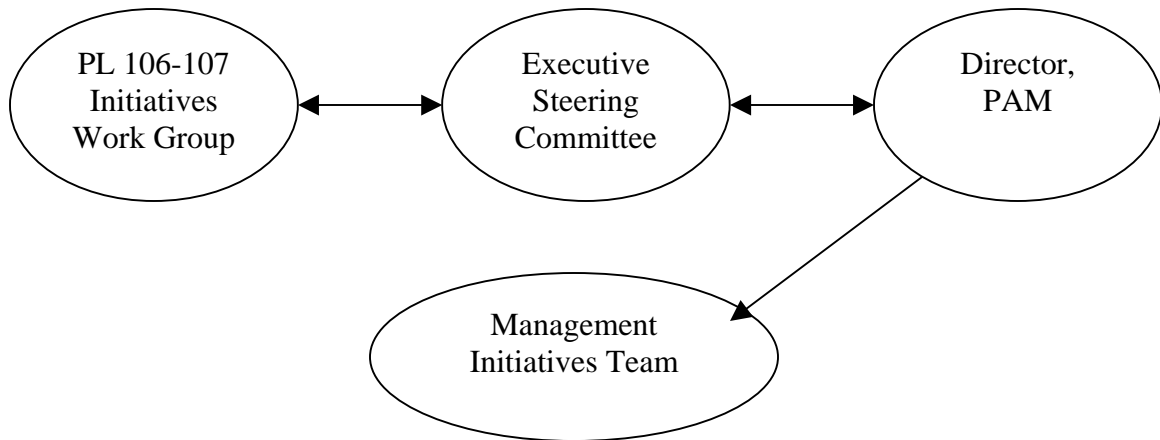
Interior has also established and leads an inter-agency Training and Certification Team with 16 Federal agencies participating. The team is exploring a partnership with the National Grants Management Association to determine the value of developing a Grants Certification Program.

In order to stay informed of Government-wide initiatives and find additional opportunities to participate in streamlining activities, DOI participates in several inter-agency meetings, such as the Grants.gov Stakeholder meetings, Grants Network meetings, and the National Grants Management Association.

## **B. Internal Efforts to Create an Environment Conducive to Grants Streamlining and Simplification and Assess Impact of Changes**

### **1. General Approach**

The P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group, represented by all bureaus/offices with grant-making authority, is responsible for assisting DOI in meeting the requirements of Public Law 106-107 including data collection, making recommendations, and developing policy. The Executive Steering Committee, consisting of senior level bureau/office management, provides oversight for the P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group as well as makes suggestions for work group action and approving recommended actions. The Director, Office of Acquisition and Property Management is the chair of the Executive Steering Committee and approves Executive Steering Committee recommendations. The DOI Management Initiatives Team, comprised of Bureau Deputy Directors, and Deputy Assistant Secretaries, is updated on financial assistance initiatives' progress.



## 2. Outreach

The P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group recognizes communication, collaboration, and consultation are essential to meeting the spirit of Public Law 106-107. A goal has been established to enhance grants-related communication between:

- a. the Department and its bureaus/offices;
- b. within bureaus/offices; and
- c. the Department and applicant/recipient communities.

In keeping with Public Law 106-107 and as a means of increasing transparency in the DOI's assistance-making processes, DOI has drafted a requirement that will provide a unified "storefront" approach to information collection and communications among and with programs, bureaus, the recipient community, and members of the public. Bureaus will be responsible for communicating streamlining and standardizing initiatives, facilitating greater coordination between financial assistance programs, providing information on assistance programs and opportunities, and reducing information collection errors. Each Bureau will designate a Communication Liaison to improve communication on DOI-wide issues.

The P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group has been a successful means of sharing information, and will continue to meet. Department-wide information is provided on the Office of Acquisition and Property Management website. Using the example of the work group, many

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of the bureaus, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, and Office of Surface Mining, have meetings on a regular basis to share information and lessons learned, work toward further standardization of policies and procedures, and receive training on new initiatives.

The DOI provides outreach to our external constituencies in a variety of ways. Information is provided on the Office of Acquisition and Property website, bureau websites, and many program specific websites. Bureaus, such as the U.S. Geological Survey and the Office of Surface Mining, have held training sessions with the public, providing status updates and training on the use of Grants.gov. The decentralized nature of DOI also permits Bureaus to work with recipients individually. The communication policy under development will assist Bureau staff working directly with the public when providing status updates.

#### Summary of This Year's Progress

- ◆ Interior has drafted a requirement that will provide a unified “storefront” approach to information collection and communications.
- ◆ The DOI has successfully provided outreach to our external constituencies.

#### Future Plans

- ◆ The communication policy will be finalized and implemented.
- ◆ The DOI will continue to provide outreach within the DOI and to external constituencies.

### **3. Training**

A user guide was developed for Grants.gov FIND, and is currently under development for Grants.gov APPLY. The Grants.gov FIND User Guide was developed as a tool for bureaus to use when training their personnel and was provided to the Grants.gov Project Management Office for use by other Federal agencies. Bureaus have held workshops and formal training on P.L. 106-107 initiatives, including Grants.gov.

The DOI has actively participated in training offered by Grants.gov, and shares information within the Department. For example, the Office of Surface Mining, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service have held workshops to inform analysts of current initiatives. The Bureau of Reclamation developed sample documents to add to the DOI Grants.gov FIND guidance.

The DOI is also in the process of developing training requirements for all DOI Federal financial assistance personnel. Elements of the policy are expected to include minimum required training and a certification of skill. The DOI Staff Development Team, a subgroup of the P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group, is helping to develop the major features of a training and certification policy.

The DOI Staff Development Team is developing a survey to collect baseline information on how the Department is using our resources on financial assistance and how staff has learned to do their job. The survey is expected to be launched in early August 2004.

There are two planned phases for the financial assistance employee training and certification requirements. The first phase includes general information encompassing the general knowledge, skills and abilities all financial assistance employees must have in order to perform their job. Phase Two will include training in specialized areas of financial assistance and training for professional development.

#### Summary of This Year's Progress

- ◆ The Grants.gov FIND User Guide was developed as a tool for bureaus to use when training their personnel and was provided to the Grants.gov Project Management Office for use by other Federal agencies
- ◆ Bureaus have held workshops and formal training on Public Law 106-107 initiatives, including Grants.gov.
- ◆ The DOI is in the process of developing training requirements for all DOI financial assistance personnel.

#### Future Plans

- ◆ A survey collecting baseline information will be used to develop the first phase of the Department-wide training policy.
- ◆ A user guide will be completed to assist in the use of Grants.gov APPLY.

### **4. Assessing Streamlining Activities**

Interior's P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group and Executive Steering Committee continues to meet regularly to address internal streamlining and standardizing efforts, such as the review of internal policies, and to assess the potential for additional streamlining opportunities. The Work Group also works closely with the FBMS team to improve standardization. For example, the Work Group has provided draft streamlining and standardization recommendations to the FBMS team and has offered to provide services when needed.

## **C. Implementing the Recent Changes Affecting the Pre-Award Process**

### **1. Grants.govFIND**

A strong supporter of Grants.gov FIND, DOI required bureaus to use Grants.gov FIND prior to the Office of Federal Financial Management (OFFM) policy letter dated October 8, 2003. To assist in the use of Grants.gov FIND, a Grants.gov FIND User Guide was developed and

distributed with the interim policy. When the OFFM policy was available, the policy was updated and finalized. Policy requirements include:

- a. Ensuring proper communication on Grants.gov FIND initiatives within the bureau/office;
- b. Providing training and assistance within the bureau/office;
- c. Providing appropriate Grants.gov FIND access within the bureau/office;
- d. Complying with the requirements of the OFFM policy letter; and
- e. Monitoring implementation of the Grants.gov FIND policy.

As of July 6, 2004, 78 announcements have been posted in Grants.gov FIND. Currently 100% of discretionary funding opportunities required to be announced as per the OFFM policy letter have been posted on Grants.gov FIND (which has legal restriction on the use of the Internet).

## **2. Announcement Template**

DOI policy guidance, in support of the OFFM policy letter dated June 23, 2003, was distributed to all Assistant Secretaries, Bureau and Office Heads, the P.L. 106-107 Initiatives Work Group representatives, and the Executive Steering Committee. Bureaus and Offices were directed to ensure the policy was distributed and enforced. To further assist in the use of template, information was provided in both the Grants.gov FIND policy and User Guide.

In order to maintain the prominent participation in following the policy guidance, the DOI policy requires:

- a. Proper communication on the use of the template within the bureau/office;
- b. Training and assistance within the bureau/office;
- c. Compliance with the requirements of the OFFM policy letter; and
- d. Monitoring of compliance with the policy.

In order to streamline the internal process for developing and issuing announcements, DOI has begun the development of an internal grants management system, a subsystem of the FBMS. The DOI system will also provide a tool for additional streamlining and standardizing opportunities throughout the grant life cycle.

## **3. The Grants.gov Portal for Electronic Applications**

The DOI has provided Grants.gov with plans to include 124 programs in Grants.gov APPLY. As of June 30, 2004, the DOI has already received 99 applicants, second only to the Department of Health and Human Services. The large number of applicants is a testament of the aggressive outreach by DOI. Grants.gov outreach is performed in a variety of ways. Information is posted on program, bureau, and DOI websites, training sessions have been held, and bureaus have worked with applicants on a one-on-one basis.

In order to make full use of Grants.gov APPLY, DOI has met with Grants.gov personnel to determine system requirements for interfacing with the Grants.gov portal when the financial assistance module of FBMS is developed.

### **III. Other**

In the past year, the DOI has aggressively pursued internal streamlining and standardization. A Department-wide electronic grants management system is under development, providing more opportunities for standardization. For example, performance report criteria and language will be standardized. The process to develop grant opportunity announcements and application packages for Grants.gov will be streamlined.

In addition to electronic streamlining and standardizing, the completed review of the grants life cycle has allowed for the identification of several streamlining and standardizing opportunities. The need for a standardized competition policy has been identified, and a baseline is under development. A training program is under development, and phase 1 is expected to be implemented next year. Improvements in communication have already been made, such as increased Departmental policy and additional information provided on websites. The communication policy, expected to be released in November 2004, will improve communication even more.

The DOI has a proven commitment to implementing Public Law 106-107. Interior is represented on many Government-wide projects including the Pre-Award Work Group, IAEGC, and Grants.gov Stakeholder meetings. The DOI has led training and certification initiatives by leading the Training and Certification Team and working with the National Grants Management Association in developing a certification program. The DOI has also actively participated in the Grants.gov initiatives, including participating in every pilot to date.

Interior will continue efforts to meet the requirements of Public Law 106-107 by continuing participation in Government-wide initiatives, completing our activities on the initiatives already underway, and initiating new ones, as appropriate.